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ABSTRACT

A study examined the meanings 20 student (physical education) teachers gave to their student teaching experiences. Investigated were the student teachers' definitions of role competence and incompetence. A critical incident report form, on which student teachers recorded two specific incidents occurring during student teaching (one dealing with role competence, the other with role incompetence), was used to collect data. Four patterns appeared consistent when the data were analyzed: (1) language used in describing incidents, categorized as Incident Descriptors; (2) number and structure of individuals involved in the incidents, categorized as Incident Involvement; (3) incidents refering to specific domains of student behavior and activity, classified as Incident Domain; and (4) combination of the two previous patterns, categorized as Incident Involvement X Domain. Findings emerging from an analysis of Incident Descriptors indicated that competent teaching experiences were defined by students working on appropriate activities within the planned lesson. Incompetent teaching experiences emphasized students' wasting time and not listening, and teachers' trying a behavior that did not work. Analysis of Incident Involvement showed that both incompetent and competent teaching most often involved experiences with the entire class. In the area of Incident Domain, social domain was ranked first for both role competence and incompetence. Analysis of Incident Involvement X Domain indicated that social experience with the entire class dominated both incompetent and competent teaching experiences. (CJ)

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Determining Teaching Role Competence and Incompetence Through the Student-Teaching Experience

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To say there has been an explosion of research on teaching in the last decade, would probably not surprise anyone here. The bulk of this research appears to have focused on two very important and significant questions. The first, what is going on in contemporary gymnasiums? Research along these lines is probably best typified by the descriptive-analytic studies completed at Columbia in the 1970's. The second predominate research question seems to be---how can we make what goes on, go on better? The answers to these questions have, and I hope will continue to, deepen our understanding of teaching physical education.

However, in the majority of the completed research, the definition of the teaching under investigation has been supplied by the researcher. The researcher, for the most part, observes and analyzes the teaching process with a preselected system and a predetermined purpose. These a priori systems and purposes define the teaching act for the researcher. Researchers have defined teaching in terms of interaction patterns, ALT, aptitude x treatment interaction and a host of other pressage, process and product measures. Make no mistake, I actively believe in and support <u>any</u> research which will enhance our understanding of teaching.

But I also believe that if we are going to change or redefine teaching, new definitions can not come solely from researchers. If we are going to change teaching and teachers, we must understand what is being changed. If new definitions

of teaching are to be realized, it appears imperative to understand how teachers define teaching. For it is only when we can influence the definitions teachers give to their actions, can we ultimately transform the teaching act. We need to understand why teachers do what they do; we need to know how and what meanings they give to their experiences. By understanding the meanings and definitions teachers give to their teaching, we can begin to understand both the potential for change in teaching as well as the medium for that change.

Therefore, this study endeavored to ascertain the meanings teachers give their experiences in the gymnasium. Based on the assumption student-teachers' strive for competence in their teaching, this study sought to understand how these teachers define competence through their actual teaching experiences. Two questions served to direct this investigation: First, How do student-teachers define role competence through their gymnasium experiences?, and secondly, what experiences define incompetent teaching for student-teachers?

The most appropriate research methodology for this study appeared to be the critical incident technique as defined by Flanagan (1954). The use of this technique would allow for the analyses of specific gymnasium events identified by student-teachers as having significant impact on their role as physical educators.

The available population for this investigation consisted of 20 Kent State University physical education student-teachers. All student-teaching was conducted during the spring 1982 semester.

Data were collected during the second, sixth, and ninth

week of the 10-week experience. The data collection instrument consisted of a critical incident report form. Using this form, students were asked to report two specific incidents which occurred during their student teaching, one which dealt with role competence and the other with role incompetence. A total of 143 incidents were reported.

Data analysis in the critical incident technique serves to summarize and describe the data as efficiently and accurately as possible. Analysis required the recognition and identification of recurring and consistent trends or patterns in the data. In reviewing the data, four patterns appeared consistent. The first identified pattern was the language coding system. This classification was labelled: Incident Descriptors. A second pattern was the number and structure of individuals involved in the reported incidents. This classification system was titled: Incident Involvement. Thirdly, the incidents appeared to clearly refer to specific domains of of student behavior and activity. This pattern formed the classification: Incident Domain. The final pattern appeared after analysis of the second and third patterns. This pattern was a combination of the two previous patterns and thus called the Incident Involvement X Domain.

After the classification systems were established, data were again reviewed for trends within the classifications. These trends formed the categories for each classification system.

Once the four classification systems and their respective categories were derived, the next procedure was validation. Twenty incidents were randomly selected from the available 143. These incidents were then analyzed by five persons from a graduate course at Kent State University. Inter-observer exact agreement for the schemes were: 90% for Incident Involvement, 84% for Incident Domain and 77% for Incident Involvement X Domain. The reliability of the classifications were considered acceptable and analyses of all the incidents were then completed by this investigator.

SHOW TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 reveals the descriptor categories, or precise words used by the student-teachers to describe incidents of competent and incompetent teaching. It appeared competent teaching experiences were defined as Telling students to Work on Activities the teacher Felt appropriate within the planned Lesson and having students do as they are Told. Such a definition would support Templin's (1979) conclusion that in student-teaching "... the ability to control is often equated with the ability to teach" (p. 484).

Incompetent teaching was described by the student-teachers as experiences whereby the teachers' Felt a behavior they Tried did not Work, resulting in the students wasting Time and not Listening. This definition indicates the teachers defined

incompetence in terms of managing time and student behavior rather than an inability to facilitate and cultivate learning. One might speculate here that the reason children fail to learn in schools today is not because of a lack of discipline, but rather, because teaching is defined as discipline. It leaves one to wonder how teaching might change if it were defined as an ability to aid learning and impart knowledge rather than an ability to control people's behavior.

SHOW TABLE 2 HERE

Incidents of both incompetent and competent teaching most often involved experiences with the entire class. It was noted, the frequency of occurrence in this category was more than doubled the second ranked category, and the three remaining categories combined did not equal the Class category. Therefore, it was concluded that student-teachers define competent and incompetent teaching through experiences dealing with the entire class. This role definition through the existing social unit, that is the class as the existing social structure for teaching, supports Burlingame's (1972) contention "... for new teachers, the chief new role learning appears to be that of a teacher operating in the existing social structure" (p. 52).

SHOW TABLE 3 HERE

Data presented in Table 3 represents the student domain reported in the incidents. For both competence and incompetence, social domain was ranked first. This finding supports the previous conclusion regarding behavioral control. The competent experiences appeared to also value the emotional domain. In this context, competent teachers were defined through experiences whereby the students not only obeyed the teacher's commands, but enjoyed doing so. As one student teacher put it:

> "Having students follow directions and enjoy themselves in a lesson is my best reinforcement."

Also noted was the Psychomotor ranking: Dead Last in both role definitions. It appeared teaching motor skills has little to do with teaching physical education, at least according to these beginning teachers.

SHOW TABLE 4 HERE

Social experiences with the entire class predominated both the incompetent and competent teaching experiences. Defining role competence and incompetence through the social structure of the entire class supported Templin's (1981) conclusion "... the student-teacher quickly learns that within the teacher's executive role pupil control and obedience are primary conditions for teaching success..." (p. 77). Data analysis in this study lead to the conclusion that role competence was defined, in part, as a teacher's ability to dominate the social interaction of the entire class. Failure to control the entire class's social behavior was defined as incompetent teaching.

The results and conclusions of this study suggests several new research directions. A nagging question left in my mind by these findings is how does this control ideology become embedded in our young teachers? The definitions these teachers gave to their gymnasium experiences surely don't reflect definitions offered in contemporary texts on teaching physical education, at least not ones with which I am familiar. This leads to a second question: Are teachers aware of the ideologies defined and living through their everyday gymnasium practices? A scant few studies (van der Mars, Mancini and Frye, 1981) suggest they are not.

The answers provided by this additional research may offer insight necessary for conscious, constructive and meaningful change in teaching physical education. Perhaps then we can hope for a correspondence between the democratic ideals of our society and the pedagogical practices in our gymnasiums.

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Table 1
INCIDENT DESCRIPTORS

Competence (N = 72)			Incompetence (N = 71)		
Rank	Category	Frequency	Rank	Category	Frequency
1.	Activity	(24)	1.	Felt	(19)
2.	Lesson	(13)	2.	Work	(11)
3.	Felt	(12)	3.	Time	(10)
4.	Work	(11)	4.	Tried	(9)
5.	Told	(7)	5.	Listen	(7)

Table 2
INCIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Competence (N = 72)			Incompetence (N = 71)		
Rank	Category	Frequency	Rank	Category	Frequency
1.	Class	(40)	1.	Class	(43)
2.	Individual	(17)	2.	Teacher	(12)
3.	Teacher	(8)	3.	Group	(9)
4.	Group	(7)	4.	Individual	(7)

Table 3
INCIDENT DOMAIN

Competence (N = 70)			Incompetence (N = 72)		
Rank	Category	Frequency	Rank	Category	Frequency
1.	Social	(27)	1.	Social	(41)
2.	Emotional	(26)	2.	Emotional	(13)
3.	Cognitive	(9)	3.	Cognitive	(13)
4.	Psychomotor	(8)	4.	Psychomotor	(5)

Table 4
INCIDENT INVOLVEMENT X DOMAIN

Competence			Incompetence		
Rank	Category	Frequency	Rank	Category	Frequency
1.	Class - Social	(20)	1.	Class - Social	(27)
2.	Class - Emotional	(13)	2.	Class - Cognitive	(11)
3.	Individual - Emotional	(9)	3.	Group - Social	(7)
4.	Class - Cognitive	(8)	4.	Class - Emotional	(7)
5.	Class - Psychomotor	(5)	5.	Individual - Social	(6)